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ABSTRACT

Twenty-two physically handicapped sheltered workshop employees were matched on the severity of their disabilities and randomly assigned to either an experimental or control group. Those in the experimental group participated in a one-hour-per-day, fifteen-day job readiness training program in addition to their regular sheltered workshop jobs while the control group simply continued with their regular jobs. Curriculum in the job readiness training program was designed to prepare clients to self-appraise their vocational interests and attitudes, to provide them with knowledge about job seeking skills, and to better enable them to exhibit more appropriate job maintenance behaviors once they have acquired a job. Included in the training were techniques related to job finding, employment application procedures, how to handle the job interview, personal presentation and appropriate behaviors in the interview or job search, and personal presentation and appropriate behaviors recommended to maintain a job. Based on a randomized block design with pretest as a covariate, the experimental group showed significantly greater attractions toward work as measured by the Vocational Opinion Index than did the control group. (BB)

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Effects of a Training Program on the Job Readiness of Physically Handicapped Sheltered Workshop Employees

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Abstract

Twenty-two physically handicapped sheltered workshop employees were matched on the severity of their disabilities and randomly assigned to either an experimental or a control group. Those in the experimental group participated in a 1-hour-per-day, 15-day job readiness training program in addition to continuing with their regular sheltered workshop jobs. The control group simply continued with their regular jobs. Using a completely randomized block design with pretest as a covariate, the experimental group showed significantly greater attractions toward work as measured by the Vocational Opinion Index than did the control group.

Effects of a Training Program on the Job Readiness of Physically Handicapped Sheltered Workshop Employees

In recent years educational and rehabilitation theorists and practitioners have been calling for a greater emphasis on job readiness training as one of the key ingredients in the vocational preparation and rehabilitation processes. Greenleigh Associates (1975) have shown that such training makes a tremendous difference in determining who gains competitive employment and who does not. Job readiness training has also been shown by others (Azrin, Flores, & Kaplan, 1975; Cuony & Hoppock, 1954; McClure, 1972) to have a positive effect on individuals' abilities to obtain and maintain jobs. All of these studies share a common focus on the beneficial outcome of job readiness training. However, little has been done to determine exactly what changes take place in participants during training which could be the basis of their subsequent employment.

The development of a more positive attitude toward the world of work may be one factor vital to the successful employment of the trainees. However, as pointed out by Brewer, Miller, and Ray (1975), little has been done to determine if attitude change is the vehicle through which job readiness training effects employment.

The purpose of this study was to provide evidence regarding the effectiveness of job readiness training in facilitating more positive attitudes toward work. Specifically, the objective was to determine whether or not work attitudes of physically handicapped sheltered workshop employees participating in a job readiness training program were significantly different from work attitudes of physically handicapped sheltered workshop employees not participating in a job readiness training program.

METHOD

Subjects

The sample consisted of 22 physically handicapped employees who were performing full-time jobs in a sheltered workshop in a medium-sized southern city. All 22 employees were matched and rank ordered using Sermon's (1972) Case Difficulty Index. Beginning with the two employees at the top of the list, the total list was divided into pairs with one employee from each pair being randomly assigned to the control group and the other to the experimental group.

Analyses of demographic data indicated that the random assignment procedure resulted in two comparably equal groups. Groups were not significantly different ($p \leq .05$) on any of the following variables: age, sex, race, number of dependents, educational level attained, length of time working in sheltered employment, length of time working in competitive employment, receiving additional subsistence payments, length of time disabled, intelligence level (raw scores on Columbia Mental Maturity Scale), severity of disability, and functional reading level (Wide Range Achievement Test).

Instrumentation

The Vocational Opinion Index (VOI), which is a five point Likert-type attitude measure, was utilized to obtain both the pretest and posttest dependent measures. This instrument has three scales--Attractions, Losses, and Barriers--which deal with attractions to work, losses associated with obtaining and maintaining a job, and barriers to employment, respectively. Whittington and Benson (1974) reported respective coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability estimates of .82, .76, and .86 for the three scales. Coefficient alpha reliability indices using the pretest

scores for the employees in this study were .62, .79, and .73 for the Attractions, Losses, and Barriers scales, respectively. Although validity evidence is limited, Benson and Whittington (1973) concluded that the VOI had useful validity in discriminating the work status of respondents.

Procedure

The Vocational Opinion Index (Benson & Whittington, 1973) was administered orally to both the experimental and control groups prior to treatment. The experimental group then participated in a 1-hour-per-day job readiness training program for 3 weeks in addition to continuing with their regular sheltered workshop jobs. The control group simply continued with their regular sheltered workshop jobs.

During the treatment, the experimental group was divided into two small job readiness classes since such training is considered to be most effective when conducted with small groups (Manpower Research Visability, 1972; Multi Resource Centers, 1971). Each experimental class met 1 hour per day, 5 days per week for a total program length of 3 weeks or 15 hours. During this time, fifteen lessons were presented, each of which included objectives, a content outline, and other instructional materials.

Curriculum utilized in the job readiness training program was designed to prepare clients to self-appraise their vocational interests and attitudes, to provide them with knowledge about job seeking skills, and to better enable them to exhibit more appropriate job maintenance behaviors once they have acquired a job. Included in this training are techniques related to job finding, employment application procedures, how to handle the job interview, personal presentation and appropriate behaviors in the interview or job search, and personal presentation and appropriate behaviors

recommended to maintain a job. Extensive use of audio-visual instructional materials was combined with videotaped role playing interviews in the job readiness training process.

Following completion of the job readiness training program, the Vocational Opinion Index was administered as a posttest to both the experimental and control groups. All data gathering and administering of the experimental treatment were conducted by the principal investigator.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pretest and posttest measurements were analyzed by applying analysis of covariance to the randomized block design. Pretest scores were used as the covariate for each scale. The general linear model (GLM) procedure from the Statistical Analysis System (Barr, Goodnight, Sall, & Helwig, 1976) was utilized to analyze each of the three scale scores on the VOI.

As can be seen in Table 1 the pretest-posttest changes in the experimental and control groups differed significantly at the .05 level on the Attractions scale.

Insert Table 1 about here

Experimental group employees mean pretest and posttest scores were respectively 61.545 and 66.545 for a mean difference of 5.000. Control group employees' pretest and posttest means were respectively 62.182 and 61.273 for a negative mean difference of -.909. Significant interactions did not occur between groups and covariate, as required by the research design.

Significant group differences identified in Table 1 for the attractions to work scale of the Vocational Opinion Index indicated enhanced perceptions of work by experimental group employees. Job readiness training appeared to have helped employees develop a more positive awareness of work. Employees in the experimental group seemed to have recognized greater benefits for their children and themselves, improved life styles, and increased independence as a result of working.

Results summarized in Table 2 indicate that pretest-posttest changes in the experimental and control groups did not differ at a .05 level of significance on the Losses scale. Experimental group employees respectively

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Insert Table 2 about here

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had mean pretest and posttest scores of 20.273 and 27.455, which resulted in a mean difference of 7.182. Mean pretest and posttest scale scores for the control group were both 26.091 for a mean difference of zero. Significant interactions did not exist between groups and the covariate, as required by the analysis procedure.

Significant differences were not identified between experimental and control group employees on the losses associated with obtaining and maintaining a job scale of the VOI. Therefore, it appears that job readiness training did not affect employees' perceptions of how work modified their personal freedom or the amount of time that they have to care for and be with their families.

Summarization of the analysis of covariance procedure for the Barriers scale is given in Table 3. These results did not show pretest-posttest

changes in the experimental and control groups at a .05 level. Experimental

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Insert Table 3 about here

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group employees respectively had mean pretest and posttest scale scores of 51.545 and 56.818, which resulted in a mean difference of of 5.273. Respective mean pretest and posttest scale scores for control group employees were 48.727 and 52.364 for a mean difference of 3.637. As desired, there were no significant interactions between groups and covariate.

Experimental and control group employees did not differ significantly on the barriers to employment scale of the Vocational Opinion Index. Consequently, it seemed that job readiness training did not have an effect on employees' perceptions of barriers to employment. Significant changes did not occur in employees' feelings toward medical, transportation, child care, and family problems. Job readiness training did not appear to significantly change employees' perceptions about getting and holding a job, entering new situations, and meeting new people.

Conclusions reached from the analysis of data and presentation of findings indicated that job readiness training does seem to affect to some extent the attitudes toward work of handicapped sheltered workshop employees, its influence appears to be a complex one operating somewhat differently on different work attitudes. Therefore, professional staff seeking ways to enhance an individual's attitudes toward work so that the person may obtain and maintain a job should find job readiness training a viable option.

Results of this study, which systematically evaluated the job readiness training process, should be of value to educational and rehabilitation

settings. Findings could have an impact on the developmental planning of various career and vocational development programs. Mission statements and program goals could be more readily communicated to and evaluated by institutional, state, regional, or national funding sources.

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Table 1

Analysis of Covariance Applied to a Randomized Complete Block Design for Experimental and Control Groups Tested with the Attractions to Work Scale on the Vocational Opinion Index

Source	df	SS	MS	F ratio	Significance
Covariate (pretest)	1	259.93	259.93	30.99	.0003
Block	10	280.44	28.04	3.34	.0417
Group	1	187.95	187.95	22.41	.0011
Error	9	75.50	8.39		
Interaction (groups and covariate)	1	6.10	6.10	.30	.5926

Table 2

Analysis of Covariance Applied to a Randomized Complete Block Design for Experimental and Control Groups Tested with the Losses Associated with Obtaining and Maintaining a Job Scale on the Vocational Opinion Index

Source	df	SS	MS	F Ratio	Significance
Covariate (pretest)	1	207.04	207.04	10.34	.0108
Block	10	622.57	62.26	3.11	.0513
Group	1	19.97	19.97	1.00	.3441
Error	9	180.28	20.03		
Interaction (groups and covariate)	1	85.96	85.96	2.63	.1232

Table 3

Analysis of Covariance Applied to a Randomized Complete Block Design for Experimental and Control Groups Tested with the Barriers to Employment Scale on the Vocational Opinion Index

Source	df	SS	MS	F ratio	Significance
Covariate (pretest)	1	674.00	674.00	10.07	.0113
Block	10	393.73	39.37	.59	.7879
Group	1	45.36	45.36	.68	.4316
Error	9	602.23	66.91		
Interaction (groups and covariate)	1	12.29	12.29	.22	.6487